

# **EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

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## **REMARKS BY COMMANDER, U.S. PACIFIC FLEET ADMIRAL SCOTT H. SWIFT**

### **INDIAN OCEAN NAVAL SYMPOSIUM DHAKA, BANGLADESH**

**JANUARY 12, 2016**

Good afternoon. Thank you for the chance to share some thoughts after a very engaging and productive convening of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium. The opportunity IONS presents to meet with such an august group of naval leaders from the Indian Ocean region and beyond is priceless. And in fact from the icebreaker that occurred the first evening, until the last panel, there is barely room left to summarize, but let me share a few comments.

First of all, I am honored to be here representing the United States Navy on behalf of our chief of naval operations, Adm. Richardson, who sends his respects and best wishes.

I would also like to thank my friend Adm. Habib and the Bangladesh Navy for hosting this year's symposium, for his assumption of the chairmanship of IONS, and congratulate as well my friend Adm. Barrett for his tenure as chairman of IONS. Between Adm. Barrett's leadership and Adm. Habib's hosting of this conference, IONS' charter to increase maritime cooperation and develop regional security architecture has been significantly advanced.

I believe IONS has made the Indian Ocean region a model to emulate for maritime cooperation, inclusiveness and transparency – one that should well apply to the broader Indo-Asia-Pacific region, as so many have commented before.

That has a lot to do with how regional countries employ their navies to pursue both national and shared interests at sea. Take the Bangladesh Navy, for example. It patrols the Bay of Bengal regularly to deter piracy, smuggling and trafficking with ships like the Somudra Joy and Somudra Avijan. In recent years, Bangladesh ships also deployed off the coast of Lebanon as part of United Nations missions and to the Philippines in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan, demonstrating a commitment to maritime cooperation well beyond local or regional waters. These efforts promote shared prosperity and protect freedom of the seas for the benefit all nations. The same is true for the positive contributions of the many regional navies that attend and host IONS. Ongoing counter-operations off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, just mentioned by the chief of the Iranian navy, are a clear example of such multilateral cooperation.

The exchange of the IONS chairmanship illustrates the Indian Ocean's geographic vastness, having passed from India to the United Arab Emirates, to South Africa, Australia, and now Bangladesh. Despite that vastness, IONS has been an inclusive organization. Adm. Habib highlighted this when he commented at the opening icebreaker that IONS was a forum for all countries that have significant interests in the Indian Ocean. These realities, both the vastness of the Indian Ocean as well as the inclusive nature of IONS, also inform the Indo-Asia-Pacific region as examples of similar characteristics that can be leveraged to achieve greater regional stability and, in turn, regional prosperity, broadly across the region.

That is one of the primary values that make IONS so successful. It provides an inclusive venue that complements and draws from the many bilateral and multilateral initiatives that increase the Indian Ocean region's prosperity, stability, and security.

I am heartened by the common theme I heard over and over again in the last two days of continuing to increase the impact of IONS governance by formally embracing the solicitation of views from all those with interests in the Indian Ocean. Consistent with the inclusive character of IONS, it seems appropriate to widen the field of observer status beyond Japan, China, Madagascar and Malaysia. Other nations, such as the United States, are prepared to support IONS leadership in the Indian Ocean by embracing the responsibility of observer status. Incorporating broader support to IONS leadership seems to me to be in the best interests of IONS' objectives.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to be present here today, profiting from the rich dialog over the last two days. Let me again congratulate both Adm. Barrett on his great success in leading IONS over the last two years, and Adm. Habib on his inauguration as the IONS chairman. I know under Adm. Habib's leadership IONS will continue to grow as an example and inspiration for leaders well beyond the regional boundaries of the Indian Ocean. Thank you.

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*\*\*As Prepared for delivery*